Active Engagement

One of the necessary elements of explicit instruction is active engagement of all students. The following suggestions are merely "creativity sparkers" intended to jump-start your thinking about ways you can increase student engagement in any classroom.

Entry/Arrival Tasks

Reading is always a prime way to engage students. During the time when students first arrive, reading activities are wonderful options. These might include, but not be limited to:

Rereading previously read text with an accompanying task

Reading from Book Boxes or Browsing Bags

Partner Reading

Writing (authentic, to learn, to demonstrate learning – specifically denoted by the teacher)

During Instruction Tasks

During instruction, it is vital that students are actively engaged as much as possible. Often, when individual students are called on for responses, other students may not continue to be focused on the activities occurring.

Highlighting – using highlighters, highlight tape

Ex. – highlight phonics patterns, sight words, beginning sounds, etc.

Response cards – ways students can use cards to participate

Ex. – teacher asks student to come to the pocket chart and place a given word in either the short e or short i category. Other students have a card with short e on one side and short i on the other. They hold up the correct response as the child at the pocket chart is placing the word.

Noisemakers – responses through the use of "noisemakers" – baby rattles, clappers, bells, etc.

Ex. – using inexpensive baby rattles, teacher asks students to shake the rattle whenever they hear a "cause."

Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down

Ex. – students show their agreement with answers given by putting their thumbs either up (agree) or down (disagree)

Other ways to use the body – finger spelling, arm tapping, stepping sounds, etc

Think-Pair-Share

Ex. – A segment of a story is read; students are asked to individually think about a prompt or question posed by the teacher; pairs of students then discuss their thinking about the given prompt or question; finally, pairs are asked to share whole-group

Think-Ink-Pair-Share

This is the same as Think-Pair-Share with one step added. After the individual thinking about the teacher's question or prompt, the student responds in some way in writing before the pairs discuss the question or prompt.

Say Something

Ex. – The teacher is doing read aloud or students are partner reading; the teacher stops/stops partner reading and asks students to "say something" about what is being read or what they are reading.

Use of white boards individual chalkboards, gel boards, etc.

Ex. – Students are asked to visualize something related to a book being read; students might draw a small picture in response; students may share their "visualization" with another student and some student share whole-group. The teacher has the ability to see the responses ALL students make.

Write in the air – Students can write in the air their response to a teacher's question or prompt. Ex. -- vocabulary words; word wall words/high frequency words; beginning sounds; letter formations; etc.

Use of manipulatives – magnetic letters, plastic letters, wikki stix, reading rods, buttons, bingo chips, cubes, beans, etc.

Agree/Disagree Slips

Students respond using slips that denote "agree" or "disagree." Ex. – A red card means "I agree" and a blue card means "I disagree."

Sit and Stand Ouestions

This is similar to the Agree/Disagree Slips. Instead of using slips, an action is designated for the response. For example, sit if you agree, stand if you disagree.

Koosh Ball

Ex. -- class stands in a circle, a ball is passed to one student (maybe the Leader for the Day, etc.); that child responds with a specifically asked for response (word beginning with ch, ect.); the ball is then passed to another student and that student responds; continue for specified time

Clap, Stop & Click

Ex. assign an action such as clap, wave, cheer, boo, hop, etc. Whenever you hear a word that begins with ____, wave.

Transition Tasks

Chanting (word walls, phonics patterns, beginning sounds, phoneme manipulation, etc.)

Ex. – teacher calls a child's name, child calls out a word from the word wall, all students chant the word and spell, repeat until transition is complete

NICE TO KNOW

Walk and talk

Ex. – one begins to walk toward the designated area and names short a words and continues until he reaches the carpet, next child is called to move the area and names short a words until she reaches the area – NOTE- this is done very quickly and children move fluidly, if a practices such as this are a regular part of classroom instruction (1-2 minutes)